

# ***Comforting Yourself***

◆————◆

**Nurturing rather  
than numbing**



## **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

William S. Middleton VA Hospital  
2500 Overlook Terrace  
Madison, WI 53705  
608-280-7084

## ***What's the difference between comforting and numbing?***

- ◆ Numbing yourself is about avoiding facing things by doing things that *decrease* awareness.
- ◆ Comforting yourself requires that you first *become aware of* what you are experiencing and then take actions that will *improve* how you are feeling rather than trying to push it away at any cost.



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***I don't even really  
know how to comfort  
myself.***

- That is very common.
- A good place to start is to think about what would feel good to see, hear, touch, smell or taste.
- As in the other skill areas, having a number of ideas in each category of skills is the most useful.



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***Do you have some  
ideas to get me  
started?***

- ◆ Sure. Let's break it down into each of the senses.
- ◆ Let me give you some examples in each category and then you can come up with your own.



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## ***How about visual things?***

- ◆ Look mindfully at paintings, photos or drawings of pleasant things (sunsets, puppies, mountains - whatever it is that you find soothing).
- ◆ Look at the things in your home that are a color and shape that pleases your eye.
- ◆ Now think of some of your own.



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## ***What about sounds?***

- ◆ Listen to or sing your favorite song.
- ◆ Listen to a tape of children giggling.
- ◆ Listen to the birds or mindfully listen to whatever sounds are around you.
- ◆ Listen to a tape of the ocean.
- ◆ Turn off the news or violent programs.
- ◆ Okay, your turn.



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## ***What else?***

- Scents can be soothing.
- Make mint tea.
- Light a scented candle.
- Bake some bread or a pie.
- What smells do you find soothing?



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## ***Any others?***

- ➔ Touch and movement can help
- ➔ Put on your softest shirt
- ➔ Rub your feet
- ➔ Wear a shirt that feels good
- ➔ Take a warm bath
- ➔ Gently brush your hair
- ➔ Move or dance in a way you enjoy



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## ***Are those all the senses?***

- ◆ Taste is the last one.
- ◆ Slowly savor a little bit of a food you love.
- ◆ Add a little bit of your favorite seasoning to your foods.



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***I feel embarrassed  
and ashamed when  
I try this stuff***

- ◆ That's sometimes how it feels at first
- ◆ Some women have the mistaken belief that they don't deserve to be comforted, or they think that if comforting doesn't come from someone else it doesn't matter
- ◆ With practice it will get easier



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***I think I could do some  
of those***

- ◆ **Great!**
- ◆ **Be sure to appreciate yourself for the persistence and courage it takes to try out new behaviors.**



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